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SUBJECT: MONTERREY CIVIL SOCIETY SEEKS TO RESPOND TO NARCO-VIOLENCE

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11. (SBU) Summary. Unnerved by the upsurge in kidnappings and overall violence, Monterrey civil society institutions - government officials, citizens groups, and the press - have set to work in attempt to find solutions. Some analysts worry, however, that the situation will get worse before it gets better as given the upcoming gubernatorial, state, and local elections they think that narco-money will inevitably find its way into the campaigns. For its part, Monterrey's private sector is working with local government to use technology to increase security. Despite the improvements, the constant refrain among citizens across the economic spectrum is that they remain fearful of reporting crimes because of their continued lack of confidence in the police. End Summary.

12. (SBU) As the wave of kidnappings, extortion, and narco-violence continues in the Monterrey region, the public - across all socioeconomic levels and classes - remains fearful. Attention shifts from one incident to another, whether it be the January 6 grenade attack on the Monterrey Televisa broadcast offices, the January 18 murder of a wealthy adolescent departing a nightclub, or the January 25 dumping of a tortured corpse outside the state government's anonymous tipster office. Many local analysts do not expect the situation to improve any time soon. (See septel which reports on the results of an AmCham Monterrey survey on business perceptions of the security environment.) Former Nuevo Leon Governor Socrates Rizzo told CG that little could be done in the short-term as the federal, state, and municipal police were all compromised. If citizens are afraid to turn to the authorities when faced with threats, then truly crime victims are on their own.

Organized Crime and the Elections

13. (SBU) Particularly worrisome, Rizzo observed, was the prospect of the upcoming gubernatorial, state, and municipal elections, scheduled to take place in Nuevo Leon on July 5. While the two principal parties - PRI and PAN - had both taken steps to guard against the infiltration of narco-money in the campaigns, in practice it would be practically impossible to prevent organized crime from bankrolling candidates. One way the cartels could impact the race would be to just bribe television anchorpersons and the commentators, thereby ensuring

that their particular candidate received favorable coverage. Alternatively, he said, organized crime could provide a candidate's staff with walking around money to distribute to voters. Meanwhile, another contact pointed out that the applicable campaign finance regulations only cover the candidate, so that it would be easy to simply funnel the narco money to a family member.

¶4. (SBU) Media representatives conoffs spoke with were similarly pessimistic about the possibility of walling off the elections from organized crime influence. They did not see the January 6 grenade attack on Televisa as a response to any reporting done by that broadcast outlet on the cartels. Instead, they saw it as an attempt by organized crime to inflict political damage on the current Nuevo Leon State Secretary for Governance - who happens to be the current governor's preferred candidate to win the PRI nomination in the gubernatorial race. Under this line of argument, political mafias contracted organized crime gunmen to carry out the attack - if true, an even more chilling scenario than the alternative theory that the cartels themselves were behind the assault.

¶5. (SBU) Our media contacts had grown sour on the idea that mass public marches, such as those that took place in August 2008 in both Monterrey and Mexico City, to protest the growing insecurity would have much of an effect. One interlocutor told us that given the lack of progress during the intervening months, he doubted that any effort now to organize a similar event in Monterrey would attract much participation. Note. During the August 30 citizen march, the leaders demanded an accounting of results after 60 days (see reftel). No such accounting has occurred, march organizers have not exerted any follow-up pressure on the government to produce it, and local

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leaders do not see any progress being made on police reform.
End Note.

Citizen's Advisory Committees

¶6. (SBU) At both the state level and in San Pedro - the upper-class suburb bordering Monterrey - government officials are using citizen advisory committees to channel some of the rising discontent and harvest ideas as to structural fixes. For instance, the well-heeled, resource-rich San Pedro committee has worked with the municipal government to: publish crime statistics and trends on the city's web site, stand up an emergency response telephone number which rings directly to dedicated San Pedro operators, establish a mobile unit at which citizens can file complaints (instead of waiting for hours in-line at city hall), and post a Most Wanted list of persons who have been the subject of multiple complaints. Best intentions have sometimes met rudely with reality however. When the city posted its Most Wanted list on the web, it received complaints from some on the list who complained they were falsely accused. In addition, the state's human rights ombudsman weighed in, telling the city the criminal justice sector was a state function and that municipalities should butt out. According to the San Pedro Secretary for Public Security, a revised, lawyer-approved, version of the list should soon be reissued.

¶7. (SBU) Other problems have proven to be more intractable. Despite the improvements, the constant refrain

among citizens across the economic spectrum is that they remain fearful of reporting crimes because of their continued lack of confidence in the police. Both state and city officials complain about the inadequate legal tools to get at the growing number of quasi-legitimate casinos and nightclubs, seen by many as havens for money laundering, drug-dealing, and extortion. The casinos are a harder nut to crack as some have licenses issued by the federal government. But the even in the case of nightclubs, government officials state that when they seek to enforce space and noise regulations in civil court, judicial corruption makes it difficult for them to prevail. And if they were to win at the trial level, the Mexican judicial system would allow the nightclubs to continue operating without the required local permits until all appeals were exhausted.

Leveraging Technology

18. (SBU) One positive development has been the emergence of C-4 and C-5 Centers (Command, Control, Communications, Coordination) at both the state and the municipal level. These units centralize dispatch elements in one place and are equipped with cameras to monitor street traffic and technology to identify license plates, thereby allowing the authorities to respond more quickly should an incident develop. According to Nuevo Leon Attorney General Luis Carlos Trevino, the state's long-delayed C-5 unit, which will rely upon Northrop Grumman engineering, is set to open in March 2009. The San Pedro Center employs different technology and currently planners are considering to what degree the two will be able to exchange data. (It's possible that all they may be able to share are common camera feeds.) Since San Pedro opened its center in mid-2008, levels of minor crimes such as burglary, vandalism, and auto theft have declined. So far, however, it remains to be seen how effective the centers will be in deterring narcotics-related violence, as opposed to everyday street crime. Often the police simply do not have the necessary resolve to respond to incidents involving organized crime. Ultimately, the degree to which the C-4/C-5 centers make a difference in that regard may depend upon the human factor - i.e., the reliability of those entrusted with monitoring the cameras. If organized crime can corrupt the monitors and/or their supervisors to gain access to the data, then it too will be a beneficiary of the centers' technology.

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